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SUBJECT: THAILAND S/GWI PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR THE 2010
SMALL GRANTS INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 132094

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¶1. (SBU) Embassy Bangkok's grant review committee submits the following four proposals for consideration for the 2010 Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) small grants initiative. Our first choice is an innovative and comprehensive economic empowerment program for women in Southern Thailand, who are often the sole support for their families due to the longstanding violent conflict in that region. We also strongly recommend a Burmese border project that focuses on outreach to Burmese men in the struggle to prevent violence against Burmese women. Finally, we endorse two smaller violence-prevention projects on the Burmese border that request limited budgets for targeted interventions. If S/GWI selects any of these local organizations for an award, the grant will be co-managed by the Human Rights Officer in the Political Section acting as a Grants Officer Representative, and a Grants Officer in the Public Affairs Section. If any of the Burmese cross-border projects are funded, Mission Thailand will coordinate monitoring with Embassy Rangoon, which has already reviewed all three proposals. The point of contact for these submissions is Political Officer Gillian Apfel, ApfelGR@state.gov.

PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION (PEF) - EMPOWERING WOMEN ECONOMICALLY TO PROMOTE SECURITY IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

¶2. (SBU) The PEF proposal seeks to empower women to address the economic challenges faced in the southernmost provinces of Thailand. Since 2004, the Deep South has been plagued with almost daily incidents of violence, mostly attributed to armed local separatist groups, which have resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. At the same time that the ongoing violence has weakened the area's local economies, women have taken more responsibility in contributing much needed income and managing family finances. The project seeks to improve the women's capacity to generate more local income by developing their existing base of knowledge and resources. PEF already has an existing foundation for this program; in 2007, they began working in southern communities and helped to establish occupational collectives for coconut oil, liquid soap, and balm producers. The current proposal will expand women's participation in these groups, as well as concentrating on individual capacity-building.

¶3. (SBU) Specifically, PEF will facilitate training for women villagers in production, design, and marketing of goods - both through local workshops and by exchange trips to other small-scale producer communities in Northern Thailand. Assistance will be given to establish production centers and once production is established, there will be further training in sales and financial management. The proposal describes these activities specifically and realistically, with a detailed budget and identification of specific program

partners, such as the use of Rural Capital Partners Co. to establish savings funds in such a way to ensure sustainability. The proposal convincingly presents a paradigm for empowering women so as to mitigate the effects of the conflict, improve economic security at the community level, and better the lives of women and families in Southern Thailand.

14. (SBU) The project duration is 18 months, and the requested budget is US\$88,091. The proposal and the local organization conform to all required parameters. The director of PEF, Chalida Tajaroensuk, is a close and trusted contact of Embassy Bangkok.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION INSTITUTE OF BURMA (HREIB) - PROMOTING MEN'S COOPERATION TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

15. (SBU) The second recommended proposal is designed to address violence against women in Burmese communities by targeting the potential perpetrators, in addition to the potential victims. Traditional ethnic communities in Burma are male-dominated, with men holding leading positions in political and religious spheres of village life. Ideas about manhood are deeply ingrained, and boys are taught to believe that aggressive behavior towards women is part of being a man. HREIB predicates their project design on the premise that it is impossible to promote gender equality and stop violence against women without the cooperation and participation of men. Currently, HREIB's Gender and Women's Rights Program has two ongoing projects within Burma, as well as one in Thailand and one in India. They would like to expand this program with a campaign specifically targeting men, using ideas and strategies developed from suggestions from male participants in their current program.

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16. (SBU) As part of their current activities, HREIB conducts both "Men Talk" and "Women's Exchange" discussion forums. The proposed project would include gender and women's rights trainings specifically for male participants, community campaign events for everyone, and peer group discussions solely involving men. They plan to supplement these activities with Burmese-language resource materials, including training manuals, posters, and leaflets. HREIB has had experience and success in generating these kinds of materials in the past, most notably its trainers' manual, which was originally published in 1998 and is still in use, and has been translated into several local languages.

17. (SBU) The project duration is 18 months, and the requested budget is US\$97,084.24. The proposal and the local organization conform to all required parameters. HREIB is well-known and trusted by Mission Thailand, and this proposal has also been vetted by Embassy Rangoon.

KAREN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP (KHRG) - EMPOWERING WOMEN TO RESIST ABUSE

18. (SBU) KHRG is an independent Karen-led NGO established in Eastern Burma in 1992 that operates both within refugee camps in Thailand and in rural Burma. Their goal is to support villagers in rural Burma by helping them develop strategies to protect themselves against abuse and by disseminating their stories, along with photos and documentary evidence. Their current proposal addresses the problem that women suffer a disproportionate share of the abuse perpetuated by the SPDC Army and other armed groups in Burma. Women are vulnerable both in negotiations with soldiers, and also because men go into hiding to avoid harassment and conscription. KHRG has previously documented this in a 2006 report on the abuse of Karen women under militarization.

19. (SBU) Since 2005, KHRG has implemented their Village Agency Project, in which they work to actively support and strengthen the protection strategies that Burmese villagers

are already using. They have been holding workshops since 2006, and in 2008-9, they held over 80 workshops, reaching more than 2,000 villagers. Now, KHRG would like to develop a curriculum for women-specific Village Agency workshops, and then conduct 20 pilot workshops and 20 follow-up workshops, with an aim to expand the project and make it a permanent part of the Village Agency program. In doing so, they hope to equip women and girls with specific skills to resist abuse, and to have a multiplier effect by training women who can train others.

¶10. (SBU) The project duration is 12 months, and the requested budget is US\$17,000. The proposal and the local organization conform to all required parameters. KHRG is known to be a trusted source and contact for Mission Thailand, and this proposal has also been vetted by Embassy Rangoon.

BURMESE WOMEN'S UNION (BWU) - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EDUCATION VIDEO

¶11. (SBU) BWU requests a small, targeted amount of assistance from S/GWI in order to supplement their current domestic violence campaigns with what they believe will be a more effective communication tool. BWU has long tried to combat domestic violence in Burmese homes, which they attribute to cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs. For example, they cite instances of community members pressuring women to stay in dangerous relationships using religious beliefs to justify abuse and blaming women for their own victimization. Previously, BWU has implemented campaigns, workshops, and educational programs to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in the community. In 2003, they published and distributed a domestic violence handbook both in Thailand and Burma, and the demand was high enough to require reprinting. However, because a substantial number of women in Burma and within the refugee and migrant populations are illiterate, they are concerned that the message is not reaching the intended audience. So, from 2006 to the present, they have expanded their program to include visual aids, such as posters, key chains, t-shirts, and pins. Although these initiatives were successful and popular, BWU believes that an educational video will be an accessible tool that will exponentially increase their ability to spread their message.

¶12. (SBU) The proposal includes the costs of producing, editing, promoting, launching, and distributing an educational video about domestic violence. This Burmese-language product will include personal statements from domestic violence survivors from diverse backgrounds and cover varied aspects of this issue ranging from causes to

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prevention. BWU has been working with a professional human rights documentary filmmaker for the past year in collaboration with Voluntary Services Overseas and recently premiered its first film. This experience allowed them to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to make the proposed educational video, and also to prepare an extremely accurate and minimal budget reflecting the costs of such an endeavor. They plan to hold screenings along all Burmese borders (with Thailand, India and China), since BWU is the only Burmese women's organization that is located on all borders, and open to women of all ethnic groups and religious backgrounds.

¶13. (SBU) The project duration is 12 months, and the requested budget is US\$5,957.15. The proposal and the local organization conform to all required parameters. BWU is a valued Mission Thailand contact, and its leaders have been S/GWI interlocutors on past visits to Thailand. This proposal has also been vetted by Embassy Rangoon.

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